CLAIMS

1.   A method for initiating a communications session involving two or more participants over a communications network, comprising the steps of:

5   exchanging messages containing non-repudiable data between said participants to establish at least one trust relationship therebetween relating to the session, said non-repudiable data indicating one or more session control functions to be assumed by individual participants during the session; and then

establishing the communications session.

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2.   A method according to claim 1, wherein the exchanging step comprises the following steps:

defining one or more control functions to be performed by at least one of the participants during the session;

15   communicating the defined control functions to the participants;

at each participant:

choosing which, if any, of the control functions the participant wishes to assume;

generating a non-repudiable message indicating the chosen function(s);

20 and

transmitting the generated message to at least one of the other participants.

3.   A method according to claim 2, wherein the non-repudiable message comprises:

25 data indicative of the chosen function(s); and at least one digital signature of the participant related to said data.

4:     A method according to claims 2 or 3, wherein the defining step comprises the step of communicating charging policy data including data indicative of the control

30 functions to a first one of the participants who has requested it from a service provider; and the communicating step further comprises communicating the charging policy data from the first participant to the other participants.

5.   A method according to claim 4, wherein at each other participant the generated

35 non-repudiable message is transmitted back to the first participant.

6.   A method according to claims 4 or 5, wherein the first participant assumes those control functions defined within the charging policy which no other participant has chosen to assume.

7.   A method for establishing at least one trust relationship between two or more participants and relating to a communications session between said participants over a communications network, comprising the steps of:

       requesting session control function data from a server, said data defining one or more control functions to be performed during the communications session;

       choosing which, if any, of said control functions to assume;

       distributing said control function data to at least one other participant over the communications network;

       receiving a non-repudiable message from the at least one other participant containing non-repudiable data indicating which, if any, of the control functions the at least one other participants has assumed.

8.   A method according to claim 7, wherein said distributing step further comprises distributing to the at least one other participant non-repudiable data indicating which, if any, of the control functions have been assumed.

9.   A method for establishing at least one trust relationship between two or more participants and relating to a communications session between said participants over a communications network, comprising the steps of:

       supplying, upon request from a participant, session control function data, said data defining one or more control functions to be performed during the communications session;

       receiving non-repudiable data from said participants indicating which, if any, of the control functions each participant has assumed; and

       storing said data.

10.   A method according to claim 9, and further comprising the steps of: checking the received non-repudiable data for any conflicts in the assumed control functions between two or more participants; and

resolving any detected conflicts by assigning the disputed control function to only one of said participants who indicated that they would assume the function.

11.   A method according to claims 9 or 10, and further comprising the steps of
5   checking the received non-repudiable data to determine the control functions which have been assumed; and assigning any control functions which have not been assumed to a first participant, being the participant to which said network control function data was supplied.

10   12.   A method for establishing at least one trust relationship between two or more participants and relating to a communications session between said participants over a communications network, comprising the steps of:
         receiving control function data from a first participant over the communications network, said control function data defining one or more control functions to be performed
15   during the communications session;
         choosing which, if any, of said control functions to assume;
         generating a non-repudiable message containing non-repudiable data indicating which, if any, of the control functions have been assumed; and
         sending said message to the first participant.
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13.   A method according to claim 12, and further comprising receiving, together with said control function data, non-repudiable data indicating which, if any, of the control functions have been assumed by the first participant

25   14.   A method according to any of claims 7 to 13, wherein said non-repudiable data comprises data indicative of a control function to be assumed, and a digital signature specific to the participant who has assumed the control function relating thereto.

15.   A method according to any of claims 7 to 14, wherein said non-repudiable data
30   further comprises a nonce value specific to the communications session, and a digital signature specific to the participant who has generated said non-repudiable data relating to the nonce value.

16.   A computer program arranged such that when executed by a computer system it
35   causes the computer system to operate according to any of the preceding claims.

17.   A computer readable storage medium storing a computer program according to claim 16.

5   18.   A system for establishing at least one trust relationship between two or more participants and relating to a communications session between said participants over a communications network, said system comprising processing means arranged to operate according to the method of any of claims 1 to 15.

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